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CIA records reveal Magrath attended classified briefing

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University President C. Peter Magrath met secretly with top CIA officials in June 1978 in an apparent attempt to enlist Magrath's aid in improving relations between the agency and the academic community, the Daily has learned.

Magrath said he attended a day of briefings, including discussions with then-CIA Director Admiral Stansfield Turner and other high-ranking officers, primarily out of "curiosity," and that he has largely forgotten what they talked about.

Magrath was one of seven presidents from large, research-oriented universities to receive such briefings in March and June 1978 at CIA headquarters in Langley, Va. Magrath was the only president accepting an invitation to Langley who asked that his participation remain a secret. Many university presidents refused to attend the briefings.

The briefings were part of a public relations effort, carried out while Turner was head of the agency. These briefings were designed to protect the agency's ability to recruit foreign and American students as agents, conduct classified research, and brief and de-brief scholars going to and coming back from Eastern bloc nations.

New Times magazine, which has been critical of domestic CIA operations, said in 1979 that the seminars were intended to "woo leading university administrators. . . . This latest goodwill effort comes in the wake of a flood of requests from some 80 universities for agency files concerning clandestine recruitment of students

and faculty by CIA operatives. Agency Director Admiral Stansfield Turner has openly refused to give any assurance that he will comply with strict guidelines proposed by Harvard University President Derek Bok to limit the agency's campus activities."

Magrath's participation in the classified briefings was revealed when the Center for National Security Studies (CNSS), an intelligence community watchdog founded by the American Civil Liberties Union, sued the CIA under the federal Freedom of Information Act to obtain all previously

classified documents related to the briefings.

The Daily obtained copies of the documents from CNSS.

Covert recruiting of students, especially foreign students, "is happening right now . . . it is always happening," according to Jay Peterzell, a CNSS spokesman. "That's probably the most important thing the agency does here."



C. Peter Magrath

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The documents reveal that a June 14, 1978 briefing was attended by Magrath, Tulane University President Sheldon Hackney, Duke University President Terry Sanford, and Jack Peltason, president of the American Council on Education.

The names of three university presidents attending a similar briefing on March 10, 1978 have not been revealed.

Magrath, president of the University since 1974, said in an interview, "I was frankly and literally curious to see what it was like (at Langley) and what they talked about."

Magrath said he had largely forgotten what the CIA briefings were about, but that they didn't seem to contain any classified material.

But if Magrath found the briefing less than memorable, Turner was moved to thank Magrath in a letter for "your interest, your understanding, and your probing inquiries. . . . I was, of course, especially appreciative of your concrete recommendations on relations between the Agency and the academic community."

"Admiral Turner felt that the hostility toward the CIA nationally—in terms of congressional opinion, national opinion—had gotten to the point where it would impair their ability to function effectively," Magrath recalled.

"I was not asked," he said, "nor was anybody asked, to do anything or to further certain points of view, or any-

thing like that—that simply was not part of the meeting."

Magrath was the only president attending the June 14 briefing who asked that his participation remain a secret. According to a memo the organizer of the briefing sent to the CIA's director of public affairs, "I emphasized in the conversations with the four (presidents) that the CIA does not seek publicity for the visit, but that your office is prepared to issue a general statement in response to press inquiries. *Only Magrath objected at this point to being identified if a reporter were to press for names. I told him that we would attempt to respect his wishes, but that we could not promise that his participation won't be revealed. He appeared to be satisfied.*"

"I never announce in advance where I go or my meetings," Magrath said in an interview. "That's my practice and my policy, whether it's right or wrong."

But other university presidents strongly objected to attending secret briefings.

"If you are free to announce publicly that you have asked some university presidents to meet and discuss CIA-university problems with you, I would be glad to accept," Michigan University President Robben Fleming wrote in response to Turner's invitation.

"I have no objection to being named as one who is attending," he continued. "What I don't want is to go to such a meeting, then find that we are being mutually accused of 'secret' conversations, and then be unable to make any comment on them."

Fleming ultimately decided not to attend the briefing.

The June 14 briefing, although carried out on Turner's initiative, was made possible by University of Pittsburgh President Wesley Posvar, who recruited college presidents at an April 1978 meeting of the Association of American Universities at Palo Alto, Ca., CIA documents show.

In an April 6, 1978 letter to Turner, Posvar offered to talk to presidents of about a dozen prestigious universities and invite them to the briefings. At the meeting, Posvar talked to presidents of the Association of American Universities, Michigan, Tulane, Texas, Johns Hopkins, Iowa State, the American Council on Education, Duke, NYU, California, and Rochester (Magrath was invited to the briefing by the CIA independent of Posvar's actions).

"All of them (the presidents) indicated a constructive attitude toward the importance of the CIA," Posvar wrote to Turner, "and showed interest in discussing how to improve relationships between the academic and intelligence communities. Several of them specifically suggested that any meeting we have be announced publicly, so as to preempt any suspicion or misunderstanding as to intent. . . . *I suggest you leave my name out of your letter of invitation; while I did make the initial inquiry, I want to avoid the impression that this is anything other than your own program, in which I am one of the equal participants.*"

Magrath said he left his CIA briefing with the feeling that the CIA was not "going to try to lay things on universities, either covertly or overtly. . . . I don't think universities should officially cooperate with the intelligence community."